

WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Rubrics and Sample Responses

Write an essay about whether it is important to seek friendships with people who are different from you.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

- ☐ write about the assigned topic
- ☐ make your writing thoughtful and interesting
- ☐ make sure that each sentence you write contributes to your composition as a whole
- ☐ make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow
- ☐ write about your ideas in depth so that the reader is able to develop a good understanding of what you are saying
- ☐ proofread your writing to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure

The names of individuals mentioned in the compositions have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the students whose responses appear in this guide.

SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- ☐ A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- ☐ An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- ☐ The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- ☐ There may be little or no sense of the writer's individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- ☐ The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

Friendships are very important to everyone. Everyone is different from one another.

It is important to seek friendships with people who are different from you. People who are different from one another show one another the good and the bad of an object. People may share different interests that one will grow to like. Friendships with differences from each other experience new ideas in which their friends like, and they may grow to be different. Friends with differences will show their friend how to do something a new and different way. For example friends with different hobbies will try both hobbies and may end up liking the other.

The only way to see if a friendship will work is to give it a try and to give it your best. Everyone is different and unique in their own way.

Score Point: 1

Starting with the assertions that friendships are important and everyone is different, the writer tries to explain how these ideas connect. The development remains vague and general (show one another the good and the bad of an object, show their friend how to do something a new and different way). The lack of development also hinders the writer's ability to express a unique perspective. In addition, repetition (friendships with differences, friends with differences, everyone is different) limits the progression of ideas, resulting in an ineffective composition.

You can have many types of friends and they can come from anywhere or be from who knows who where. But the truth is that, if you consider him or she your friend, trust him or her and be glad that you at least have someone you can talk to. Also, accept it because not many people do.

There are many people whos friends are different from what they are and make different choices, but when a good friend is there, he is able to give you advice and is able to say no.

You may take advantage of that person and go behind he or she's back but I'm pretty sure that in the long run you'll be the one going to him or her asking for forgiveness and maybe you'll get lucky and that person will always be thier for you no matter what but also think and dont be wanting to be taking advantage of anyone, especially a friend because a friend is always there for you or that's the way its always been for me.

Score Point: 1

The writer begins with the idea that it is good to have someone to talk to and then abruptly shifts to a confusing discussion of betrayal. The attempt at development is so vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas. Conventions errors weaken the fluency, and because of the generality throughout (many people, him or her, that person), there is little sense of the writer's voice.

I believe it is important to seek friendships with people who are different from you, because you benefit in many ways. The different ways you can benefit are: by getting to know different cultures and learning new things from different people.

In the "Amir" passage I learn that conviving with different people can left you too many good benefits. Their community have people from all over the world; Mexican, Poles, Italian, African and Indian. All this people foreverywhere learn to seek friendships that were different from them. They learned to be together as a community, helping each other in any way. "We were used to helping each other by them." I also like to refer to the "Long Road Home" passage where it was important for Masud to try to find friendship with someone that is different from him. I think it was very difficult for him to be with a person that did not have the same religion as him or because she was American and the U.S was destroying his Country. "It is asin to be with you, talking friendly in this way, he said I must pray very hard every night after living you." "A man must not speak friendly with a woman who is not his wife." "We have rules. You are not Muslim." I believe it is important to find friendships with different people, because that way you can find out all the good things that people have. In addition having friendships with different people can help you and give you a better understanding of the diffent cultures, religions, life styles and customs that everyone have.

Score Point: 1

In this ineffective composition, the writer attempts to discuss different ways you can benefit from friendships with people different from you. The writer uses passages from the reading selections in an attempt to illustrate the idea of learning about other cultures; however, the text used is not connected to the concept of learning. Errors in conventions weaken the fluency of the composition.

Have you notice everyone is different in their own little way? Some people may be interested in cars some may not, some may be athletic and can be able to play, other people may just like sports. Everyone has their own opinion about having a friendship with people who are different from them.

I think it's important to seek friendship with people who are different from you, because when you have friends who are different from you, you get to know a little bit more about them and why exactly are they different from you. Knowing what makes people from you is important, for example you may know something they don't have a clue about and you teach them about it and vice versa, at the end you'll could be able to share your ideas with everybody else. Getting

to know people different from you is very interesting because you may never know what you could learn from them.

How exactly can you tell when someone is different from you? I think you could tell when you get a chance to know them and what they are about. But not exactly everyone is different.

People are different only in the way they dress, their character, their activities etc. but mainly everyone is exactly the same as you. It's important to get to know different people because you get to know things you really didn't expect.

Everyone has their own opinion about how people are different and if you should have a friendship with them, but is everyone exactly different?

Score Point: 1

After stating that everyone is different and listing ways that people can be different, the writer presents a vague and repetitive discussion of why it is important to be friends with people who are different from you. Toward the end of the composition, the writer questions the entire thesis by stating that "not exactly everyone is different." The contradiction leaves the reader wondering what the writer intended to say. The vague and general development reveals no sense of the writer's individuality.

SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.
- ☐ Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.
- ☐ Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.
- ☐ The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.
- ☐ Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

It is very important to seek friendships with people who are different from you in many ways. No matter if it is some one who has the same culture as you but has a different personality, or if they have a different culture from you with the same personality.

If nobody made friends with different people then the whole world would be very segregated and hateful. If we all come together as one then we would all be able to help each other when in need. It always feels good to know that you have a friend who is always there for you and is willing to help you get through tough times. If no one were friends with a different cultural ^{people}, then we wouldn't be able to have all the good things that was originated from their country. For example, we would not have all the different choices in clothes, food, sports, etc. that came from other cultures. If everybody was the same, then the world would be a very boring place. There wouldn't be all the different ideas that people come up with or new inventions.

For all of these reasons, I believe that this is where the saying "opposites attract" came from.

Score Point: 2

This writer introduces the premise that differences in people can stem from their cultural backgrounds or from their personalities. The body of this somewhat effective response focuses on the benefits of friendships between different people (if everyone was the same, then the world would be a very boring place). The development remains superficial throughout.

Throughout life, one will develop many friendships, whether they are professional, casual, or personal. Friends are a way of learning about others, and yourself. Everyone should seek friendships with whoever they are intrigued by, no matter who they are.

To begin, people are shaped by who they are around. If you always hang out with bad people, sooner or later you may find yourself doing bad things. People are one of the strongest influences in life, and a person of many colors usually has many unique friends. By surrounding yourself with people different than you, their influences rub off and make you a more diverse person.

Secondly, surrounding yourself with people who are different than you can keep you accountable. Someone who has conflicting views with you, whether friend or foe, can help you come to understand things about yourself more clearly. It is important to understand why you believe certain things, or go to the places you go, and friends can help you figure this out.

Finally, friends who are different from you can influence your lifestyle. No one is perfect,

but some things about us are. Look to a friend who does something really good, and learn that thing from them. Their influence is like free help to make you a better, more well-rounded person. Also, if you pick up and share traits with your friends, the bond between the two of you will grow.

As you can see, no one wants to have friends just like themselves. Diversity was created for a reason, and everyone should use it to their advantage. By looking at your friends and their differences from yourself, you are realizing the importance of having friends who are different from you.

Score Point: 2

The writer presents the thesis that friends provide a way of learning about others and yourself. The composition stays focused on three ways friends can influence your life (people are shaped by who they are around, help you understand yourself, help make you a better person) and includes some superficial development, but the progression of thought is not always smooth. The lack of meaningful transitions from paragraph to paragraph limits the reader's understanding of how the ideas are related.

Importance of Friendship.

"Hey! Do you want to go out tonight?" How many times you wished that the phone would ring and somebody's voice would ask you this question? "Yes, hundreds of times, but do you know why nobody called? Do you know why nobody called that time when you were sad and wanted to talk? Because you need more friends, not only those who fun to chat with, but those who can listen too."

Friendship is something that makes people happy and full of life, and it is important to seek for new friends who are different, because they can knowledge you.

Everybody has a least one person in the class that nobody ever says hello to, not because they don't like that person, not because there is something wrong, because this person is different, but if you just crack the shelter ~~the~~ he or she hides under you might learn a lot from him/her.

Many people are afraid of new friendships, but they don't realize that new friends can bring them something they never experienced before. In the story "Amir," neighbors were afraid of being friends with each other until one person broke the ~~to~~ wall between them by starting a simple conversation about eggplants. As the author says, "Those conversations tied us together."

Starting a simple conversation with person who is

different may change your points of view. Masud changed his mind about the United States because his friend lives there, also ^{friends} can open your mind and teach you many things.

Friendship with different people is important because friends are best way to learn, therefore they can teach you many interesting and useful things.

Score Point: 2

After an engaging introduction and brief philosophical development of our need for friends, the writer uses examples from the reading selections to extend the thesis. The conversation about eggplants from "Amir" and Masud's changed opinion of America in "Long Road Home" help illustrate the idea that you can learn from friends who are different, but the development remains superficial. In addition, awkward phrasing (it is important to seek for new friends who are different because they can knowledge you) weakens the overall fluency of the composition.

This composition will be about whether it is important to seek friendships with people who are different from you. I will be trying to persuade you to believe it is important. So don't judge a book by its cover, what matters is in the inside.

I believe it is important to seek friendship with people who are different from you because then you learn what other people are like and it makes you get into their heads as to see how they view things. You wouldn't want to have friends who are exactly like you because you already know what you're like and you get to meet new interesting people. By talking to someone different can change your life forever.

For example, Let's say you were a quiet and reserved person, then comes along a crazy and free spirited person. You wouldn't automatically want to be their friend because different scares you. But over time you talk to this person and find out they are amazing, so what were you scared of. You notice you are a little more out going and crazy. You're changing and becoming a new person.

You don't find meeting people as scary and you love the new you. So then your life has

been changed forever. You and your new friend start to talk about religion and your religions are totally opposite. You get intrigued by this and want to find out more so you explore. For all you know this can be a life changing experience because now you're thinking about having a different religion. By talking to different people it gives you a whole new perspective of life and the world around you.

To conclude this I would like to write, knowing people who are different from you is exciting and breath taking. So go find a new friend today. (who isn't like you).

Score Point: 2

In this somewhat effective composition, the writer attempts to develop the theme that learning what others are like can change your life. After a formulaic and perfunctory introduction, the writer gives an example of how someone might become more outgoing after meeting a new person and then quickly shifts to the idea that one might become interested in a new religion after talking to someone new. Although there is some sense of the writer's voice and the control of conventions is good, more depth of development would be needed for a higher score.

SCORE POINT 3

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.
- ☐ For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

People tend to congregate themselves into groups of friends that share the same views, aspects of life, and often ethnicity. This seems to make perfect sense, associating with only similar people, but I believe that to be all wrong. You will never understand those you do not persevere to relate with. You would be surprised what you can learn from people just by having an open optimistic approach to people and their beliefs.

I think that friendships are like the ionic bonding of the elements. An element can bond forming another element by sharing electrons, or by gaining & losing them. We can form friendships in which we share the same beliefs, but nothing more is gained except maybe a stronger faith in whatever it is you share. The only difference with going outside your comfort zone and associating with a person who is different you gain something you never had before. In return, you give them insight on something they never had before. Now the both of you have bettered your understanding. Continuation of this process can help you understand people who are different on a whole new level.

Understanding people is the only way to get places in life, which is why I find it to be so important to practice this. For instance, say that you are going for a job interview with someone that is a different descent. If you had a friend that was the same

descent probably shares similar views and aspects as your boss. Now you can have a topic to discuss with him that you may not have had before or maybe just simply a characteristic from your friend you didn't have previously.

Well, back to the topic of bonding, like I said before, you can gain electrons as well as lose them. My simile to that is that you don't always gain a positive characteristic from different people. People can negatively influence you. This is where your beliefs come into play. The people you bond with, become friends, are your choice and you must make them wisely in order to accomplish whatever goals you might have.

In conclusion, if chosen wisely an array of opportunities to better understand people in your surroundings opens up to you by being outgoing and optimistic. I think that it is very important to do so and encourage everyone to strive to do the same.

Score Point: 3

This response is focused on the thesis that you can learn from associating with a person who is different from you. The student uses an effective analogy by comparing friendships to various types of chemical bonds, which also reflects the unique voice of the writer. The sentence to sentence progression of ideas is generally smooth, and the development overall reflects some depth of thought.

Is it important to build friendships with people from other cultures, or is it better to stereotype and avoid someone from a different race? What if it was possible to learn something from that other person, or to help each other? The short stories "Amir" and "Long Road Home" illustrate the idea of race integration.

The story "Amir", by Paul Fleischman, is the story of a garden that brings people of different cultures into a community. Originally, all the different races avoided each other, and a young man named Royce was stereotyped as "dangerous" due to the color of his skin. However, through the garden, all the different people began to help each other and build friendships, and Royce turned out to be kind and helpful. This story illustrates the idea of putting aside stereotypes and accepting people for who they are. The garden community became a better place after the different cultures joined, and this principle should be applied to everyday life.

The story "Long Road Home", by Lois Raimondo, is an American woman's account of her experience in Afghanistan. Her translator, Masud, was an Afghan with strong Islamic beliefs and the conviction that he should hate America and anyone who comes from it. Through the time he spent with the author, Masud eventually put aside his prejudice and built a deep friendship with the author. He discovered that he could not hate America as he once had because his new friend had come from there, meaning it couldn't be as bad as he once thought. Through this account, it can be seen that where one comes from has no effect on who they really are. Like Masud, everyone should try to become more open-minded and put aside their stereotypes of different people, because two different people have so much to learn from each other.

In conclusion, the importance of being open-minded and accepting those who are different can be seen through the stories "Amir" and "Long Road Home".

Score Point: 3

The writer shows how each of the reading selections, "Amir" and "Long Road Home," illustrates the value of building relationships with those of other cultures or races. The purposeful use of carefully selected portions of the plot combined with critical analysis shows the importance of being open-minded and accepting those who are different. The generally smooth and controlled progression of ideas and a good command of conventions contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of the writer's ideas.

I live in a community where most people look and act like me. I can't help it, I live right across the border from Mexico. All of us here are Mexican-American. This is one of the main reasons why I used to be scared of other cultures, because I didn't know better. As I grew up, I started meeting people of different cultures. I noticed that even though we were not of the same race we shared the same problems and point of views. It was hard at first for me to talk to a white person, I always thought they would laugh at my spanish accent. To my surprise all the people in my community are very friendly.

When I traveled to Austin for a summer camp I had the chance to really talk to people of various different cultures. It was then when I understood the importance of making friends with people that are different from me. I had the chance to meet people from all around the world. I worked at the DPS (Department of Public Safety), issuing out driving tests. I found that my spanish accent actually caught the attention of the customers. They would ask me questions about where I

was from. I found that not only I had an accent because I heard all different kinds of people talking. I met people from Cuba, Puerto Rico, Russia, Germany, China, and Japan. They would ask me where I was from and we would share a nice small conversation. All the different accents were like wonderful music to my ears.

Getting out of my home town awakened my senses. I am not scared of sharing my culture with others, I am actually willing to learn more. I only wished I could have shared long conversations with all those people at the DPS. They were all very kind, even though they looked and talked very different from me. I will never forget the day I got to hold in my hand a Chinese baby. He looked so cute with his different Chinese eyes. Once I even asked a woman from India why she wore a diamond in the middle of her forehead. Thanks to this experience I feel more cultured and better educated. I am more confident now and eager to learn more about others. I am not scared that someone will laugh at my Spanish accent anymore.

Score Point: 3

The writer presents a personal reflection in this generally effective composition. After establishing a context for the formation of an initially narrow point of view, the writer shares details and observations of a summer trip that changed her perspective. The smooth progression of ideas, development that reflects some depth of thought and a sense of the writer's individuality (All the different accents were like wonderful music to my ears), and a consistent command of conventions contribute to the composition's overall effectiveness.

Have you ever felt like "Shrek"? You know, the ogre who lives in a swamp and wants nothing to do with the outside world. At some point in the movie, he claims that he's not the one with the problem, the world is. Well, I believe we all at some point in time develop stereotypes about other people, religions, or groups. Sometimes, what we fail to realize is that we all boil down to one thing. We are all humans; imperfect, and relation seeking humans.

As not only a people, but a species, we need to let go of our walls. We need to step out of our forts and castles. We need to step out and take a good look around. We need friends, allies, and companions. But, we could go around picking people that are congruent or similar to us. That's not the way it works. We need to stop discriminating amongst ourselves, and seek for the upside in people. Strong relations can be made with people that come from all walks of life. Unbreakable bonds can be made without sharing religious, racial, or other backgrounds.

The Earth and all of its inhabitants share many things, but yet deny it. We all drink from the same water. We all grow and live off the same land. We all wake up to the same sun and fall asleep under the same moon and sky. Look at it this way; we are all stuck in this one giant blender. But, instead of just sitting there and waiting to be mixed, we all act like oil and water. We prohibit ourselves from becoming a heterogeneous mix. Well, guess what? It's time for us to sit calmly and turn on that blender. We just need to hit that little button that reads "mix," but why

don't we? Why? I'll tell you why. We always make things so complicated. We try to rub off our misfortunes on others. We can't just see things for what they are.

Seeking friendships with different people benefits us all. We all can enrich our lives by spending some time and energy with others. Our minds can grow if we open them and listen to new ideas and beliefs that others have. We have to meet each other at a midpoint.

At the end, "Shrek" opens his mind and begins to interact with others. He lives happily ever after.

Score Point: 3

The central thesis of this generally effective composition is that since all humans need relationships with others, those relationships can be formed with people from all walks of life. Starting with a reference to popular culture (the movie "Shrek"), the writer uses effective imagery (step out of our forts and castles, stuck in this one giant blender) to develop the idea that different people need to associate with each other. The development overall reflects some depth of thought.

SCORE POINT 4

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.
- ☐ The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

Growing up in my hometown, everyone looks and acts the same. About 98% of our town is upper middle class and caucasian. Most people dress the exact same - the same Abercrombie jeans, Reet sandals and Northface jacket. If you are of a different race or just choose to not fit in the mold, you definitely stick out. One such girl who stuck out was MARCELLA.

When I was in 2nd grade we got a new student at the start of second semester. She walked in wearing a very fancy baby pink dress with a lace covering, tied in front with a huge white bow. Compared to my dirty sneakers and two sizes too big sweatshirt, MARCELLA certainly did not look like the rest of us. When our teacher, Mrs. STAPLE began asking her the "get to know you questions", she spoke nothing, but Spanish. No one in our class understood a single word she was saying. As the bell rang for recess, our entire class sprinted out the door for our daily ritual of boys against girls soccer. The game involved the entire class, but no one bothered to ask MARCELLA. She simply sat on the sideline wearing her dress staring off in the distance. After recess the day went on. As the final bell rang, Mrs. STAPLE called me to her desk asking if I would mind being MARCELLA'S special buddy. At first my mind filled with doubt "I don't understand her, she's weird", but I obeyed and said yes. As her special buddy I was required to fill her in with what she missed when she was absent. After two weeks of not doing any "special buddy" work MARCELLA was absent. I wrote down her address and had my Mom take me to her house straight after school.

Upon arriving at her home, I immediately noticed her family's collection of sombreros and smelled the sweet smell of tortillas. After I rang the doorbell, a surprised MARCELLA answered the door. MARCELLA looked happy to see her work and to see that someone cared. MARCELLA tried her best at English and said "Thank you, You like tortillas?" I responded "si" and over that tortilla I learned who she really was. I now understood she was a fun girl whose parents had wanted a better life for her and her brother JOSE. As I left I tried my best Spanish and asked her to play soccer or "futbol" as she calls it with us.

At recess the next day, MARCELLA helped the girls' team finally defeat the boys. Everyone in our class begged Mrs. STAPLE for simple Spanish lessons and she agreed. We all took the time to get to know someone other than the normal person you see everyday. Although MARCELLA has since moved back to Mexico, I contact her once a year and have visited her. I have fallen in love with the Mexican culture and I am glad I took the time to get to know someone outside our typical Caucasian standards.

Score Point: 4

The writer uses a narrative strategy to describe becoming friends with a new girl at school. Depth is achieved through smooth and controlled progression of ideas and carefully chosen details (her fancy baby-pink dress, my dirty sneakers, the sweet smell of tortillas). By framing the narrative between the initial soccer game with the newcomer excluded and the game where she helped the girls defeat the boys, the writer deftly shows the value of friends who are different. Control of conventions and the expression of a unique perspective contribute to the effective communication of ideas.

It is very important to create bonds with people different from you, lest bigotry and intolerance arise. Throughout history it has been seen that fortune favors the friendly, raising allies above divided enemies and making diverse cultures prosper.

If one is not in contact with other cultures and other kinds of people, one risks the rise of bigotry and isolationism, in which case it is very hard to stop anti-foreign views and a tyrannical spirit. These go-it-alone views have been held by such groups as the Nazis, the Soviets, the European colonial powers, and many Ancient and Feudal lords and commanders. This kind of "social inbreeding" leads to many of the same problems as its biological counterpart: a lack of new information leads to a repetition of defective values and the eventual degradation of the entire system. This is obvious in the repeated falls-from-grace of racist, isolationist, and absolutist governments. The kind of social inflexibility that comes from shunning those with different views rapidly leads to an inability to deal with a changing world and leads to being eventually overtaken by more accepting, and therefore more wide-spread and competitive, groups. Without the input of different groups and peoples, a culture is unable to "shore up" its deficiencies and weed out its defects, and thus is unable to improve itself.

This fact has been proven in countless wars and conflicts throughout human history. During World War II, the cooperation between the United States, Britain, and Russia allowed them to defeat Germany. Only by combining their efforts could they defeat their enemy, who was essentially fighting alone. During the American Revolution, Britain's army & navy were vastly superior to their fledgling American counterparts, but with the aid of the French, the Americans were able to win the day. Use of Chinese, Russian, Indian and Muslim tactics allowed the Mongols to create the largest land empire in history, and only when the Romans enlisted the aid of the Goths were they able to defeat Attila's Huns. Any one group or culture has a weakness, but when several work together they are able "cover each other's backs," as it were.

This is, of course, also true on a personal level. Through communication with other people, one is able to learn from others and grow as a person, thus enriching one's life and increasing the probability of success in one's endeavors. Only through the constant exchange of knowledge and ideas are we able to work together and help one another to grow.

Score Point: 4

This writer expresses individuality and takes a compositional risk by addressing the prompt from a global and historical perspective. After a meaningful introduction proposing that open-minded cultures are more successful than isolated ones, the writer presents a thorough and specific argument for the need for different ideas for the good of society. The subsequent examples are insightful. An effective organizational strategy, vivid word choice, and strong conventions enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

It's not always easy to step out of your shell. Many times we find ourselves adhering to and being most limited by our personal comfort zone and a strict following of daily routine. When we fail to reach beyond ourself, to make an effort to extend kindness or pleasant expression, we in essence let a great opportunity slip through our fingertips without a second thought. Such remains true in our everyday lives, as each moment gives us an opportunity to befriend a neighbor, outstretch our hand in the community, or gain a better understanding of the intricacies of the world we live in. The differences that exist between cultures, beliefs, or backgrounds between neighbors begin to serve as a strengthening force in a tie which binds them as "friends", a mutual feeling of respect, clarity, when one overcomes the initial feelings of doubt, timidity, and shyness in order to befriend someone different, the friendship that develops allows both people to gain a new sense of cultural knowledge and appreciation, a strong support system and circle of friends, and most importantly realize the similarities and mutual responsibilities we share on this earth.

Fortunately, last summer I was given a wonderful opportunity to help an impoverished community in Reynosa, Mexico. I quickly jumped at the chance to experience such a change from my daily routine and learn about a people very different from my friends at home. Though my limited ability to speak Spanish could have limited my ability to befriend the children my age in Reynosa, it remained a nonfactor as a simple smile, handshake, or helping hand mean the same thing in all languages. While building the house in the small town, I worked side by side with my Mexican friends. Each day more and more members of the small town would come to

lend us a hand, and certainly, the tasks would not have been completed had our forces not combined. In this way, the differences in our dress, language, and beliefs made no effect on our ability to build a house for a family in need, not as Mexicans and Americans, but as people.

Through my experience, I gained a much deeper understanding of the benefits of overcoming first impressions, differences, and shyness. In effect, I was able to not only pick out the differences between the Mexican culture and my own, but in recognizing such variety, I could better appreciate my own heritage and the similarities between the two. The friendships that developed in the garden in the short story of "Amir", pointed out the benefits that new bonds of community can have on society when people in a neighborhood gain respect for one another. In this instance, the diverse and crowded community is able to develop a support system to protect each other and their living space. Just as the neighbors in this story benefited from the joint responsibility and cooperation, so did I when my new Mexican friends in Reynosa helped our group finish the house. Clearly, when neighbors are able to befriend one another, they not only gain from the support system that develops, but also develop a greater appreciation for the diversity of our world.

As we continue to grow into this new millennium, it is important for us all to realize and recognize the fact that we share in a diverse and complex web and variety of people. When we fail to take advantage of the opportunities that we have for befriendng our neighbors of a different race, culture, or belief, we are the ones who miss out. A simple smile or kind act can be the first step to transforming our minds and lives.

Score Point: 4

After a philosophical introduction, the writer effectively transitions to a reflective narrative about helping a Mexican community. The writer's comparison of personal experiences to those in "Amir" (Just as the neighbors in this story benefited from the joint responsibility and cooperation, so did I) is an effective use of the reading selection and adds depth and insight to the piece. Consistent control of conventions, smooth and controlled progression of ideas, and a thoughtful perspective combine to make this composition highly effective.

I sit in my chamber, all windows locked with no way in and no way out, except for the door, my one flaw, which I keep locked as well. I sit in the darkness of my room with only the drone of my fan to let me know I am still alive and well.

The window mocks me with its temptations of the outside world, but I easily pass off these temptations and continue on with what seems to be my endless solitude. As I sit I slowly nod off into a dream.

In this dream I have been placed in an alien world. This world is far brighter than that of which I am used to, and there is life all around me. There are flowers of every color, grass in random spots with what looks like still stone-colored rivers running through them, there are buildings in lines along the river that stretch farther than my eyes can see, and there are creatures that closely resemble those that inhabit earth. All these things seemed interesting, but were nothing compared to the thing that stole the most of my attention.

These creatures were anywhere from four to six feet tall by a quick glance, they are all of different colors in hair, skin, and coat, and the oddest thing of all, they seemed to pay no attention to my presence. I decide to attempt to engage in conversation with what I believe is a

female form of the creature. The creature welcomes me in a language that I have not heard before, but it is close enough to English for me to communicate with her. I quickly gather myself and ask what planet I am on. She quickly replies "Terra!" and scampers off. After this, I find what seems to be a male creature. Before I can speak the creature greets me. Once again he speaks a language I've not heard before, but I can understand him. I ask him what species he is and he looks at me dazed for a bit and asks me "You're kidding, right?" I repeat my question again and he replies "I am human, like you. What else would I be?"

I awake from my dream a bit puzzled with what the creature had told me. I forget my solitude in my room and walk briskly down the stairs. I take a deep breath and open the door to the world I have not seen before. As I gaze out the door I am shocked to see the same world as my dream.

Everything now makes sense to me and I am happy that I have left my lonely chamber and met people. All of these people are different, all have different ideas, and all have taught me something about life and myself that I could never find in that room.

Score Point: 4

In this unique approach, the writer describes in vivid detail a dream and how it entices him to abandon his solitude and appreciate the differences in the outside world. The controlled progression of ideas and the writer's precise use of language (drone of my fan, the window mocks me, lonely chamber) help the reader understand the isolation the writer experiences. As the writer transitions to the outside world, the conclusion (all have taught me something about life and myself that I could never find in that room) summarizes the impact the dream had on the writer's life.